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Inventory for

Manuscript Collection
MS - 152

Thomas P. Gibbons Papers

1864-1892

by
Elisabeth Meier
July 2018

½ box
.2 linear feet
Accession no. 66.1733-1736, 67-2342, 67.2455, and 74.160.1

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Abstract

Thomas P. Gibbons, Captain (1841-1904)

Papers, 1864-1892

½ box

Sea captain based in Bath, Maine

This collection contains a sea journal, some correspondence, and a master's certificate for Thomas P. Gibbons, an English-born captain who sailed Maine ships in the California grain trade and related long-distance routes. The journal covers Gibbons's voyages on the *John R. Kelley* (ship) from 1890 to 1892 and describes the daily working of the ship. Most of the correspondence is from Gibbons's friends on Pitcairn Island.

Gifts of James B. Drake, Frederick E. Drake Jr. and Mrs. Leslie E. Shumway.

MS-152. Accession #66.1733-1736, 67.2342, 67.2455 (L-11), and 74.160.1.

Finding aid (folder level control) in repository.

Added entries—persons:

Gibbons, Thomas Patten (1841-1904)

Young, Rosalind Amelia (1853-1924)

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

John R. Kelley (ship)

Triumphant (ship)

Added entries—key terms:

Cape Horn trade

Case oil trade

Grain trade

Kerosene industry

Logbooks

Merchant mariners

Pitcairn Islands

Ship captains

Ships

Ships – Maintenance and repair

Acquisition

The journal (67.2455) was given to the museum by Mrs. Leslie E. Shumway. The remainder of the collection was donated by members of the Drake family. The Drakes were close friends of the Gibbons, and Captain Gibbons's daughter, Mary F. Gibbons, boarded with Frederick E. Drake's family circa 1940.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection.

Physical Condition

The documents are mostly in good condition. Some of the letters are splitting along old fold lines. The front board of the logbook is loose but the binding is otherwise in good condition.

Processing Notes

This collection was assembled from material placed in several manuscript and small manuscript collections that had been formed without reference to each other as each donation arrived.

Related Materials

Maine Maritime Museum has a collection of Captain Gibbons's charts marked with the voyage of the *John R. Kelley* (71.12.38, 40, and 41) and his parallel rules (72.31.10). Gibbons's certificate for admission to the Boston Marine Society is in OM 3/10. There are also several portraits of Gibbons in PC-3, a painting of his daughter, Mary F. Gibbons, and her friends in Japanese attire (72.63.1), a medallion from the ship *Majestic* (73.179.2), and the family Bible.

Historical Note

Thomas P. Gibbons (c. 1841-1904) was born in England. He reportedly arrived in America as a cabin boy on a ship commanded by Captain Horatio Patten of Brunswick; by the 1860s, at least, Gibbons was listing his address as Brunswick, Maine, and he became a naturalized American citizen in Bath in 1867.

Gibbons sat for, and received, a British captain's license in Cardiff in 1864. His first command was probably the *Clara Hargrave* (bark), owned in London. Circa 1869, he took charge of the ship *Majestic*, managed by Thayer & Lincoln of Boston, which sailed in the California grain trade and related routes. In 1878, he moved on to the *Triumphant* (ship), also managed by Thayer & Lincoln. In 1883, Gibbons became the first captain of the new Bath-built ship *John R. Kelley*, then one of the largest sailing vessels in the world.

Gibbons married Susan Riggs Fisher (1841-1924) in 1865. They had four children, three of whom were born at sea: Frederick R. (1869-1902), Mary (Molly) F. (1870-1963), Thomas S. T. (1873-1929), and Robert A. (1876-1876). Captain Gibbons frequently brought his family along on voyages.

Thomas P. Gibbons retired from the ocean in 1893 and purchased the Woodward Coal Company in Bath. He operated the business with his son, Thomas, until his death in 1904.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains a sea journal, a small amount of correspondence, and some miscellaneous documents from Captain Thomas P. Gibbons. The journal is a daily record of Gibbons's time on the Bath-built ship *John R. Kelley* between 1890 and 1892 on voyages to Philadelphia, Kobe, San Francisco, and Liverpool. It describes the vessel's location, weather, sail configurations, shipboard work, and notable events like the death of a sailor or threats to impound the ship.

The correspondence consists of letters from Rosalind Young and other residents of Pitcairn Island, where Gibbons regularly stopped for fresh fruit. In addition to personal notes,

these include a lengthy history of Pitcairn and description of the community there. The collection also contains Gibbons's British master's certificate and a letter of commendation from several insurance companies for preserving the ship *Triumphant* off Cape Horn.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder	
1	1	Master's license, Thomas P. Gibbons, 1864
	2	Letter, Boston Marine Insurance Co. et al. to Thomas P. Gibbons about the preservation of the *Triumphant* (ship), April 16, 1883 (photocopy)
	3	Correspondence with Rosalind Young on Pitcairn Island, 1882-1891
	4	Sophia Volk, 1886
	5	Notes, undated
	6	Thomas P. Gibbons, journal kept aboard the *John R. Kelley* (ship), Philadelphia – Kobe (Japan) – San Francisco – Liverpool – Philadelphia, July 1890 – February 1892
	7	Transcripts of letters from Rosalind Young (originals in folder 3)